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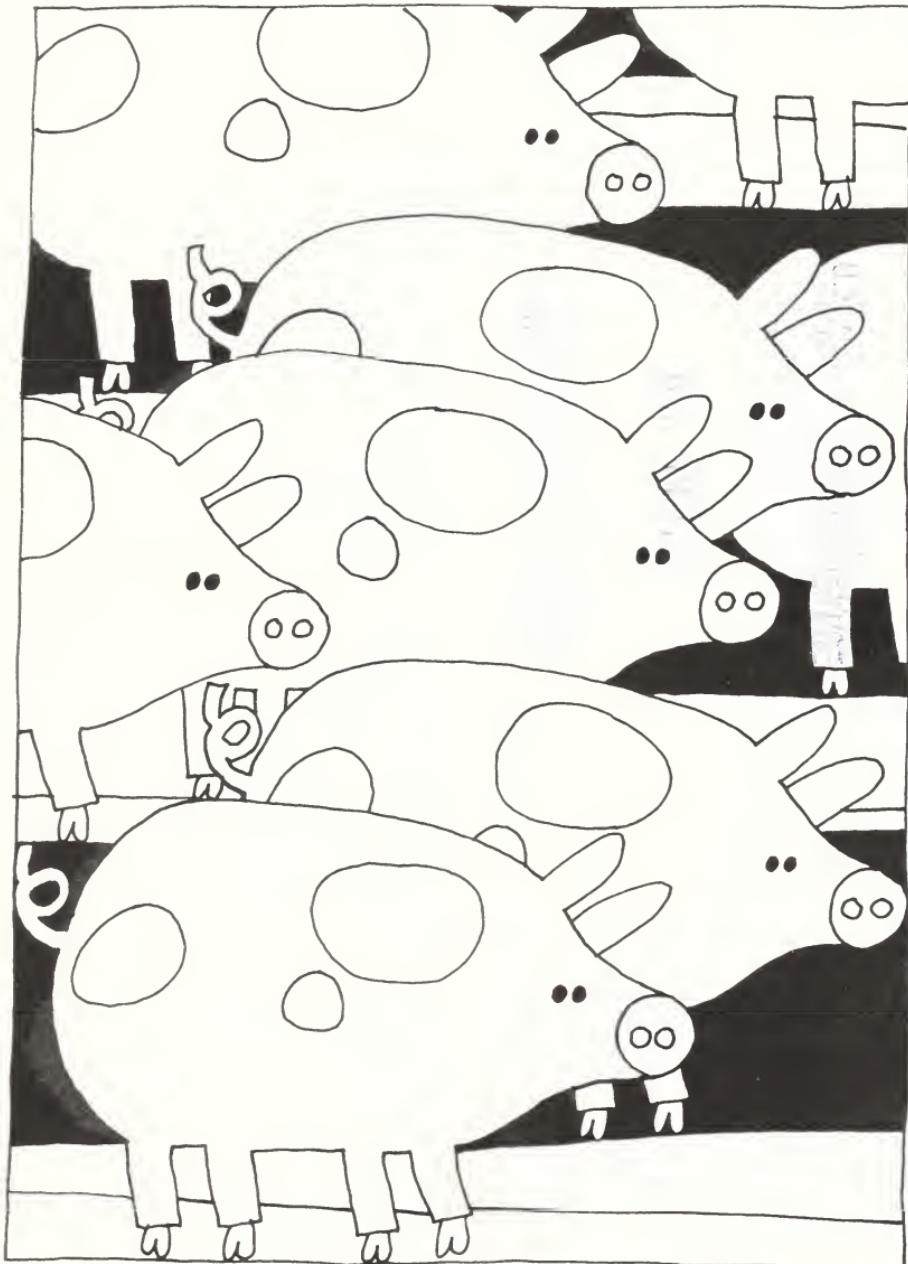
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# agricultural situation

THE CROP REPORTERS MAGAZINE • SEPTEMBER 1976  
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE • STATISTICAL REPORTING SERVICE



LIVESTOCK REPORTS: HOW THEY HELP

The reports indicate inventory numbers for total hogs and pigs, broken into breeding and market categories. The market hogs and pigs are reported in five weight groups ranging from under 60 pounds to 220 pounds and over. Also included are sow farrowings, average number of pigs per litter, and production plans for the coming half year.

This information is broken down by individual States, but most people use the nationwide estimates. The reports allow producers and other members of the hog and pork industry to estimate future marketings, check developments in the hog cycle, and determine farmers' farrowing intentions over the next 6 months.

Projecting future marketings makes up the single most important use of the quarterly Hogs and Pigs reports. For example, by looking at the number of market hogs on hand on June 1 and the previous December-to-May pig crop, you can get a good idea of the number of hogs to be marketed between June 1 and December 1.

Usually, hogs reach market weights within 6 months, and during recent years have been marketed at an average of 235 to 240 pounds. Hogs weighing from 75 to 125 pounds generally gain 1.55 pounds a day, but start putting on about 1.65 pounds daily after they've passed 125. Weather, feeding rates, and rations, of course, affect daily gains. The table on page 5 shows the five market weight groups and their projected slaughter periods.

In estimating future slaughter it's necessary to compare the slaughter projections with the previous year's slaughter figures or even figures from 2 years earlier to see the year-to-year change.

This type of comparison provides guidelines on how fast to push hogs to market weights or to market. If it appears that near-term marketings

## LIVESTOCK REPORTS: HOW THEY HELP

Many producers rely on SRS's livestock reports for help in making key production and marketing decisions.

Those who don't read the reports still use them indirectly through the actions and reactions of other producers, economists, the hog industry, and the farm press, who study the releases regularly to assess the current situation and project future supplies and prices.

How do they use the reports? Let's look at one release that draws considerable attention: the Hogs and Pigs report. It's published quarterly to reflect conditions on the first day of March, June, September, and December.

The June and December Hogs and Pigs reports cover all 50 States, while the March and September releases carry information on the 14 major producing States.

will be higher than the previous year, it will probably be worthwhile to sell hogs as soon as possible before prices slip from present levels.

Quarterly Hogs and Pigs reports also show turning points in the hog cycle. For example, the December 1975 and March 1976 reports indicated an upturn in farrowing intentions for 1976—the first increase since 1971.

This suggested an upswing in hog slaughter during the second half of this year and into 1977. Indications of this buildup in future farrowings may be a signal to hold the line or cut back since lower prices and reduced profits may lie ahead.

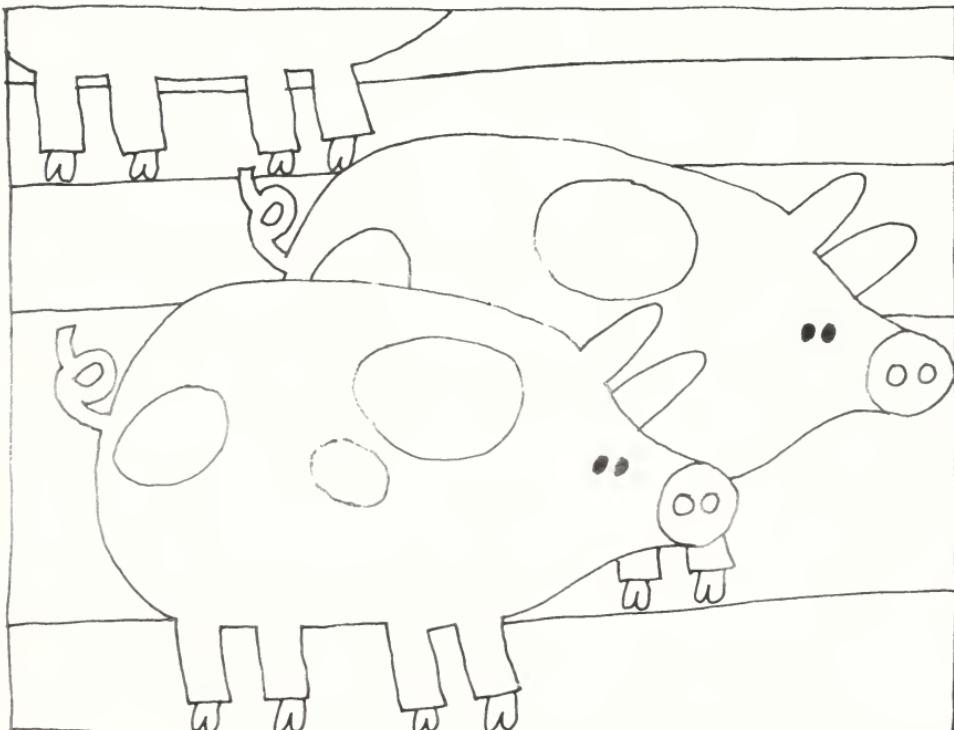
Producers should remember, though, that farrowing intentions are simply what livestock people *plan* to do just prior to or following the breeding period, and are therefore subject to some adjustment. As a result, the actual number of sows farrowed could end up far different

than indicated by farmers' intentions.

A sizable gain in projected future supplies tells the producer to market as many pigs as possible before the time when the increased volume is expected. For market hogs destined for sale during the high-volume period, a producer has several alternatives. He can fatten the animals faster or sell them at lighter weights. He can also slow down his marketing schedule.

Data on upcoming hog supplies also help producers decide whether it's more profitable to sell their feeder pigs or to hold on to them and market them after feeding.

Few producers over-react to data in the Hogs and Pigs reports, but many let the figures play an important role in their production plans. The reports don't tell the whole story, however. A successful producer also considers supplies and prices of feed, beef, and broilers, consumer incomes, and other factors that stimulate or depress hog prices.



Opposite is the June 1976 Hogs and Pigs report issued by SRS on June 22. It contains a June 1 estimate of the hog inventory, farrowing, and farrowing intentions for producers in the 50 States.

#### Inventory Number on June 1:

- Compares yearly changes in total breeding and market numbers.
- 3-year comparison helps spot trends.

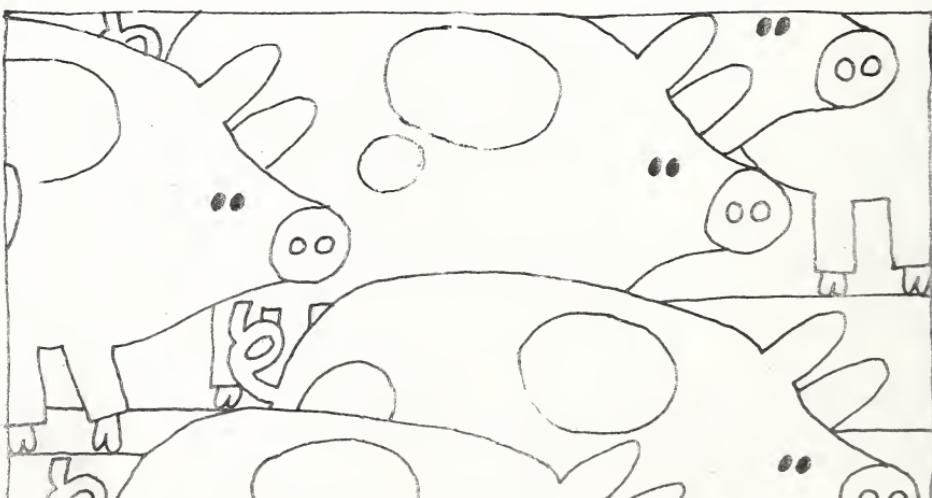
#### Market Hogs and Pigs by Weight Groups:

- Projects marketings over next 6 months.
- Helps producers decide whether to push hogs to market or slow down.
- By 3:00 p.m. on June 22 (report release time), all hogs over 220 pounds and some in the 180-219 pound group had already been sold.
- Market weight groups and projected slaughter periods are:

under 60 lbs.	.....	Oct. 15 - Dec. 1
60-119 lbs.	.....	Sept. 1 - Oct. 15
120-179 lbs.	.....	July 15 - Sept. 1
180-219 lbs.	.....	June 15 - July 15
220 +	.....	Before June 15

#### Sows Farrowing and Pig Crop

- Projects future supplies and marketings (average 6 months from birth to market).
- Pigs farrowed from June 1 to August 1 are usually marketed from December 1 to February 1.



**Hogs and Pigs: Inventory Number, June 1 and December 1, Sows Farrowing, and Pig Crop, 1974-76, United States**

Item	1974	1975	1976	1976 as percent of 1974	1976 as percent of 1975
<b>Inventory Number-June 1:</b>					
All hogs and pigs	59,437	48,165	52,643	89	109
Kept for breeding	8,905	7,405	8,241	93	111
Market	50,532	40,760	44,402	88	109
<b>Market Hogs and Pigs by Weight Groups:</b>					
Under 60 pounds	23,858	18,502	21,039	88	114
60-119 pounds	12,181	9,974	10,849	89	109
120-179 pounds	7,835	6,909	7,167	91	104
180-219 pounds	4,955	4,298	4,336	88	101
220 pounds and over	1,703	1,077	1,011	59	94
<b>Inventory Number-December 1:</b>					
All Hogs and Pigs	55,062	49,602			
Kept for breeding	7,416	7,634			
Market	47,646	41,968			
<b>Market Hogs and Pigs by Weight Groups:</b>					
Under 60 pounds	17,818	16,307			
60-119 pounds	12,603	11,130			
120-179 pounds	9,764	8,118			
180-219 pounds	5,790	4,880			
220 pounds and over	1,672	1,533			
<b>Sows Farrowing:</b>					
December <sup>1</sup> -February	2,679	2,159	2,454	92	114
March-May	3,693	2,810	3,235	88	115
December <sup>1</sup> -May	6,372	4,969	5,689	89	114
June-August	2,847	2,507			
September-November	2,619	2,452			
June-November	5,466	4,959	25,811	106	117
<b>Pig Crop:</b>					
December <sup>1</sup> -May	45,075	35,534	41,379	92	116
June-November	38,879	35,772	342,130	108	118
Year	83,954	71,306	383,509	99	117
<b>Pigs per Litter:</b>					
<i>Number</i>					
December <sup>1</sup> -May	7.07	7.15	7.27	103	102
June-November	7.11	7.21	37.25	102	101

<sup>1</sup>December preceding year.

<sup>2</sup>Intentions

<sup>3</sup>Average number of pigs per litter with allowance for trend used to compute indicated June-November pig crop.

# MAKE ROOM FOR SUNFLOWERS

Only about a decade ago, most U.S. sunflowers either graced American gardens or were raised for the confectionery and bird seed market.

But a surge in world demand for oilseeds and the development of high-oil sunflower seeds brought new prominence to the rangy sunflower. Reflecting the growing interest in sunflower production, SRS earlier this year expanded its national program of crop estimates to include sunflower seed in North Dakota and Minnesota.

The first indication of this year's sunflower crop appeared in SRS's June Acreage report, which was released June 30. The report showed that farmers in North Dakota and Minnesota planted 698,000 acres in sunflowers, down 11 percent from a year earlier. Oil-bearing varieties made up more than 70 percent of the two-State crop.

Around the first of June, North Dakota growers expected to harvest oil-bearing sunflowers on 313,000 of the total 478,000 acres indicated for harvest. Minnesota producers looked to harvest 189,000 acres across the State, 161,000 of them in oil-bearing types.

Similar data, broken down by oil



and non-oil varieties, will appear each year in the June Acreage report. Next June, on the same day as the Acreage report, SRS will also issue a separate Sunflower Seed report containing revised acreage, yield, and production for 1976.

Information for the June Acreage report comes from growers' responses to mailed inquiries—which now include questions on sunflower seeds. Revised data for the previous year will be based on surveys of contractors and processors.

A wrap-up of the 1976 sunflower crop will be released in January 1977 and cover acreage, yield, production, price, and value.

## PERFECTING THE MEAL

Sunflowers have already proven a rich source of vegetable oils that are high in unsaturated fats. But what about the meal that's left after crushing?

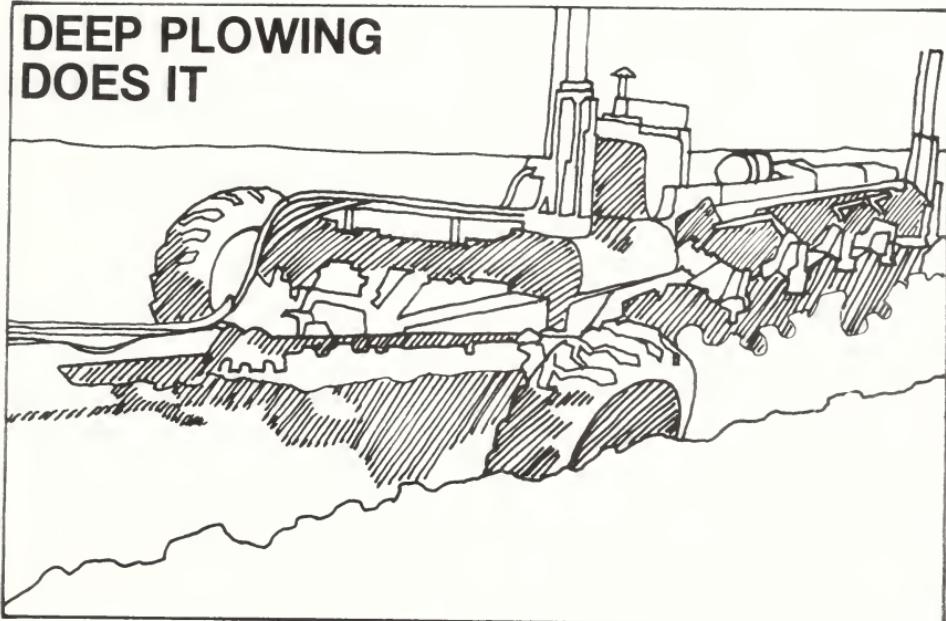
That's a problem being tackled right now by scientists with USDA's Agricultural Research Service (ARS). They hope to eliminate or reduce the chlorogenic and similar acids found in the protein products from sunflower seed.

The acids react with protein, causing a tan or brownish discoloration in food products like flour. A loaf of bread made from sunflower seed meal, for instance, comes out of the oven an unappetizing gray.

Once they get the color out of sunflower seed meal, researchers will also run tests to determine to what extent the meal can be texturized, and then assess its quality and performance in various food products.

If results are favorable, scientists expect the tiny sunflower seed can become a far more versatile food commodity.

## DEEP PLOWING DOES IT



The trick to getting around certain troublesome sodic soils is to first get under them. It looks as though scientists with USDA's Agricultural Research Service (ARS) have found a way.

So called because they contain an excess of sodium ions, sodic claypan soils hamper crop development on more than 20 million acres in the northern Great Plains of the United States and Canada.

Getting under these soils involves plowing 24 to 30 inches deep instead of the usual 5 to 6 inches. In 9 years of testing on fields in western North Dakota, deep-plowed plots yielded 30 percent more wheat than conventionally plowed farmland.

Randomly distributed, slightly depressed, bare or partly bare spots of land typically signal a sodic soil condition. Commonly dubbed claypan, scab land, and gumbospot land, sodic soils not only impede seeding and tillage operations, but cause water stress on crops.

Scientists blame it all on the claypan layer, a dense, fine-grained sodic material that usually occurs near the surface. Because it tends to puddle when wet and forms a hard

crust when it dries, claypan keeps water out and blocks root growth.

Without deep plowing, small grains on certain ARS test plots headed and matured prematurely because of water stress. But on deep-plowed plots, the crop grew more before heading, matured later, and so produced bigger and more numerous grain heads.

Deep plowing works by changing soil condition in a couple of ways. According to one ARS scientist, digging below the claypan first breaks up the sodic material and then mixes in native soil gypsum which lies below the dense layer. This allows more water to enter the soil.

The benefits of deep plowing speak for themselves: increased water holding capacity, better root penetration, and improved water availability to the plant. In fact, in each of three consecutive growing seasons, small grains drank up over an inch more stored water on deep-plowed plots than on soils plowed just 6 inches deep.

Costs run about \$30-35 an acre, depending on plow type, field size, and specific soil conditions.

# SURVEYSCOPE

*To give our readers a clearer picture of the vast scope of SRS activities, Agricultural Situation presents a series of articles on special surveys undertaken in various States. While these are not national surveys, they are important to the agriculture in individual States.*

"Maryland tobacco is an industry as old as the State itself, and unique in a number of ways," claims John Witzig, Statistician in Charge of the Maryland-Delaware Crop Reporting Service.

'Type 32 tobacco, as it's otherwise called, is grown primarily in Maryland, and we're the only tobacco-producing State in which growers plant the current year's crop before the previous year's harvest is marketed.

"In late February and early March," Witzig explains, "farmers begin seeding the crop in preliminary beds. But the crop harvested the year before isn't sold at auction until sometime

between mid-April and early June."

Witzig's office maintains a full estimating schedule on type 32 tobacco, which during 1972-75 meant over \$100 million to Maryland growers. The surveys, taken entirely by mail, are geared to SRS's national releases on crop production, planting intentions, and acreage.

Because many of the State's farmers produce only tobacco, the Maryland office sends out special tobacco questionnaires to roughly 300 of an estimated 4,500 tobacco growers. Data from other tobacco producers are collected on general



Type 32 tobacco, worth more than \$100 million for Maryland growers in 1972-75 . . .

farm report questionnaires covering other crops as well.

The annual survey schedule begins around April 1, when growers are asked how many acres they intend to plant. A June 1 survey determines the number of acres that were actually put into production.

The June survey also asks growers about their previous year's crop to get a firmer figure on final yields. The reason is that Maryland tobacco is air-cured for many months and loses about 85 percent of its moisture. Producers, therefore, have a much better idea of their actual yield once they remove the tobacco from curing barns and sell it at auction the following spring.

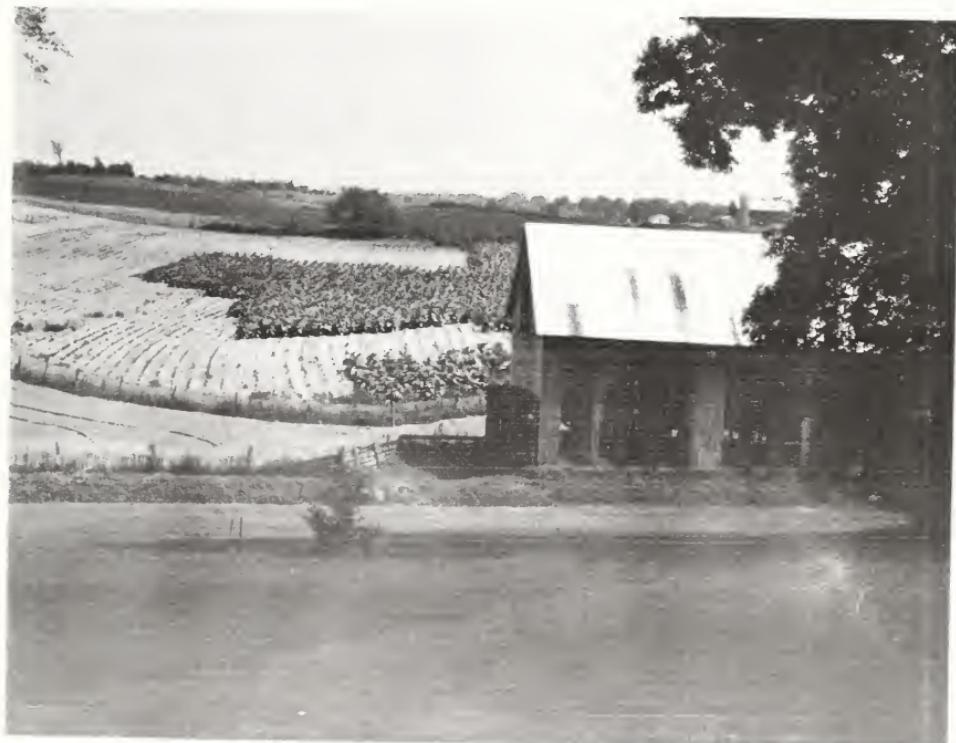
Follow-up surveys around the first of August, September, and October check the current crop's progress. Full details on production and harvested acreage are collected in late November and appear in SRS's Annual Crop Summary the following January.

The Maryland office also publishes periodic reports to keep its tobacco growers and other producers abreast of current crop conditions. Each spring, the office releases an annual summary of production, yield, and harvested acres by individual counties.

"Nearly all our crop is produced in only five southern counties," explains Witzig, "where the tobacco flourishes in the light sandy soils along the Chesapeake Bay."

"Last year, the five counties produced an estimated 21.9 million pounds of tobacco, grown on roughly 23,000 acres. Both yield and production dropped considerably due to adverse weather during the growing season.

"Just the year before, though, yields stood at an all-time high of 1,260 pounds an acre, resulting in a final harvest of around 30.2 million pounds worth \$28.9 million to Maryland growers."



... is loaded on sticks to be hung in open-sided barns for several months of air curing.

## IN FOCUS

American agriculture: more than 200 years in the making and growing bigger and better all the time. For an idea of where it is today, take a look at USDA's recently published yearbook, "The Face of Rural America."

The photo format of this bicentennial edition makes it a first in a series that began in the 1890's. Photos on this page are typical of the 335 pictures, some in color, that fill the book's 288 pages. Around 50 photographers worked across the Nation to assemble this 1976 yearbook of agriculture. Their goal: to capture American rural life as it is in our 200th year.

On the merits of such a project, Agriculture Secretary Butz observed, "If someone had been able to put together a good book of photographs in 1776 showing colonial life as it really was, that book would be invaluable today."

For a copy of the 1976 yearbook, send \$7.30 to the Superintendent of Documents, Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 20402, or visit any Government bookstore.



## A NEW PERSPECTIVE ON PRICES

Late last May, SRS came up with a fresh look at the commodities farmers produce and the goods they buy to run their farms and maintain their households.

That's when the agency issued revised monthly index figures for prices paid and prices received by farmers from 1965 to date. Reason for the update: a re-evaluation of the "weight" or relative importance of individual commodities bought and sold by farmers.

Because these relationships change over time, SRS periodically reviews them and assigns new weights. The last revision was made in 1959, using 1953-57 as the base reference period. The new base weight period spans 1971-73.

This year, revised weights assigned to commodities in the index of prices received by farmers changed the crop/livestock relationship only slightly. The value of livestock products sold by farmers inched up to 56 percent of all farm commodities, nudging crops down slightly to 44 percent.

But it was a different story among individual commodities. Under the new, 1971-73 base weight period, weights for corn, soybeans, and beef cattle increased, while wheat, cotton, tobacco, hogs, milk, and eggs all were lower.

In other words, the importance of

such old standby commodities as cotton and tobacco declined sharply in the over-all price structure. Cotton dropped nearly two-thirds from 8.4 percent to 2.9 percent. Tobacco fell from 4.1 to 2.4 percent. Eggs dropped by more than 40 percent.

Meantime, soybeans turned up 2½ times more important than under the old base weight period, rising from 3.1 to 7.8 percent of the index. Corn's importance rose about 50 percent, and the value of cattle in the over-all mix of farm commodities climbed nearly 60 percent. The importance of hogs, however, retreated 15 percent.

Several commodities were dropped from the index altogether, while others were added. Broilers, for instance, replaced farm chickens, reflecting the sharp increase in broiler production and consumption in recent years. And rye, sheep, lambs, wool, milkfat in farm-separated cream, and several vegetables were all scratched from this year's revision.

Data for determining new weights in the prices received index were gathered in SRS's regular price estimating program, which surveys local elevator operators, livestock dealers, marketing agencies, processors, and other buyers of raw farm products.

Information for assigning new weights in the prices paid index was provided by surveys of thousands of farmers during 1971-75 to determine production outlays, and a 1973 survey of farm family living expenditures.

The surveys showed that more of the farmer's dollar goes for production items, interest, and taxes, and less for family living items than 20 years ago.

As a result, production items now make up roughly 60 percent of the total prices paid index—versus around half 20 years earlier. Family living items, on the other hand, slipped from 40 to 30 percent of the total.

# Briefings

RECENT REPORTS BY USDA OF ECONOMIC, MARKETING, AND RESEARCH DEVELOPMENTS AFFECTING FARMERS.

**ROOM TO GROW ON . . .** In a search begun in May 1975, USDA's Soil Conservation Service (SCS) turned up 111 million acres of potential cropland in the U.S. That's about equal to total U.S. acreage planted in corn, oats, and sorghum last year, and compares with nearly 400 million acres planted in all crops in 1975. SCS field studies focused on non-Federal land in all 50 States, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands. In a breakdown based on the difficulty and expense of switching to crops, the study singled out 24 million acres of "prime farmland" that could be converted simply by tilling. Roughly 54 million acres qualified as "high potential," and another 33 million were identified as "medium potential" because they pose some serious—but not irreversible—erosion hazards and water disposal problems. It may be, too, that acreages beyond this 111-million-acre total could safely make the switch to cropland. Previous SCS estimates of convertible cropland have run as high as 266 million acres.

**WOOL STOCKS MOUNT . . .** Though world wool production in 1975 barely topped the 2.6 million tons (grease basis) produced in 1974, raw wool stocks in producing countries took a dramatic upswing. USDA's Foreign Agricultural Service reports that production gains registered by half of the world's eight major producing countries were offset by declines in the other four, including the U.S., where 1975 output totaling 50,000 tons fell 5,000 tons short of the previous year. During 1975, most importing countries remained trapped in a recession, with rising trade deficits and swelling unemployment and inflation rates crippling textile activity.

**ALMONDS IN ABUNDANCE . . .** California almond growers look for this year's crop to hit a record 210,000 tons, in-shell basis, nearly a third above last year's and 11 percent ahead of the record 1974 crop. Thanks largely to ideal weather conditions, which have promoted good nut sets in most areas, this year's crop is expected to yield 255 million pounds of nut meats. Stepped-up almond shipments, both here and abroad, should considerably reduce total carryover into the 1976/77 marketing season.

**TAMING THE WIND . . .** Last July, USDA added \$15 million to the 1976 Agricultural Conservation Program to control wind erosion in the Great Plains. Farmers in 460 counties now participating in the Great Plains Conservation Program are eligible for funds to cover 50-90% of the cost of wind erosion control measures. Initially, the supplemental funds were provided for immediate relief of wind erosion problems caused by drought. But because the drought finally broke, the money will now go for permanent conservation practices to prevent the problem from recurring. Cost sharing is limited to three practices: field wind breaks, permanent vegetative covers, and strip cropping systems.

**FEWER LAMBS EQUAL LESS WOOL . . .** SRS's Crop Reporting Board estimates there were 8.9 million lambs in the U.S. on January 1, 10% fewer than a year earlier. Breeding ewes 1 year old and older totaled just over 9 million head, down 7% from January 1975, and ewe lambs less than a year old numbered around 1 million head, off 11%. An upshot of the overall decline: U.S. wool production this year could shrink 10% to roughly 108 million pounds, grease basis, as the number of sheep and lambs supplying wool has slipped 7% to 13.4 million.

**TAKING THE BITE OUT OF TART CHERRIES . . .** For tart cherry fans, 1976 doesn't look too promising. Forecast at just over 71,000 tons, U.S. production this year may sharply lag 1975's utilized tonnage by 42%, making it the smallest crop in more than three decades. SRS blames the downturn mainly on the vagaries of springtime weather in the Great Lakes States. Too warm temperatures followed by harmful freezes slashed Michigan's crop by more than half to only 45,000 tons, its smallest output in nearly 10 years. As the Nation's No. 1 tart cherry producer, Michigan accounts for roughly two-thirds of this year's eight-State total.

**NOT SO SWEET . . .** Foul weather earlier this year also reduced prospects for the U.S. sweet cherry crop, now forecast at nearly 148,000 tons, or 4% below 1975's utilized tonnage. In its June production forecast, SRS credited the Great Lakes States with just over 14,000 tons, less than half their 1975 volume and the lowest since 1963. Michigan's crop is estimated at only 12,000 tons, sharply below the 27,000 tons utilized in 1975 and its 25,500-ton crop of 1974.

**GOOD NEWS FOR GARDENERS . . .** The Japanese beetle's days of proliferation may be numbered, according to scientists with USDA's Agricultural Research Service. The researchers have isolated, identified, and synthesized the sex attractant produced by the female

beetle. In field tests, traps baited with the attractant have captured more male beetles than traps containing live female beetles. It's possible, say the scientists, that when enough attractant is distributed in an area, mating can be disrupted and no further generations produced. The highly destructive Japanese beetle now attacks over 275 different kinds of flowers, fruits, vegetables, and ornamentals, causing losses and related expenses estimated at more than \$25 million a year.

**HELP A WOUNDED TREE . . .** A new publication by USDA's Forest Service shows the signs and symptoms that may indicate the development of decay in a tree that's been wounded. "Rx for Wounded Trees" contains 71 color illustrations depicting examples of common tree care problems and what should be done to correct them. For a copy of "Rx for Wounded Trees" (Agriculture Handbook No. 387), write the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 20402. Price is \$1.35.

**ON THE LABEL . . .** More than 50% of shoppers find nutritional information on food product labels very useful, but about 20% think the data may be of little or no help. That's from a recent nationwide poll in which USDA's Economic Research Service asked 1,400 main food shoppers to rate the usefulness of nine types of label information. Prices and freshness or open dates on food packages got high marks, with over 90% saying they were very useful. On the other hand, only 30% claimed that drained weight information on products packed in liquid would be very beneficial.

**POULTRY BREAKTHROUGH . . .** The U.S. poultry industry scored a first earlier this summer when it sent the first of ten 3,500-ton ship-loads of domestic frozen whole broilers to Iraq. In this first such large scale sale of its kind to this increasingly important market, USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service kept tabs on packaging and product quality at plants and docks. It's expected that the large, high quality U.S. broilers will stir up a growing demand for U.S. poultry meat among Middle East/Persian Gulf customers.

**WATER, WATER, PURIFIED . . .** Under a 1-year grant from USDA's Agricultural Research Service, scientists in Tennessee will look for ways to purify farm water supplies. Research will focus on the effectiveness of ultra-violet irradiation, ozonation, chlorination, and combinations of the three in treating runoff water from animal holding areas. The scientists also plan to improve techniques for producing potable water with minimum chlorination.

# Statistical Barometer

Item	1974	1975	1976—latest available data	
<b>Farm Food Market Basket:</b> <sup>1</sup>				
Retail cost (1967=100)	162	175	176	June
Farm value (1967=100)	178	187	183	June
Farmer's share of retail cost (percent)	43	42	40	June
<b>Cattle Inventory, July 1:</b>				
Cattle and calves (mil. head)	139.0	140.1	133.5	July
Cows and heifers that have calved (mil. head)	56.8	58.0	53.8	July
Beef cows (mil. head)	45.6	46.8	42.8	July
Milk cows (mil. head)	11.2	11.2	11.1	July
Heifers 500 pounds and over (mil. head)	19.1	18.9	18.9	July
For beef cow replacements (mil. head)	7.9	7.4	6.5	July
For milk cow replacements (mil. head)	3.9	3.9	3.9	July
Other heifers	7.3	7.6	8.4	July
Steers 500 pounds and over (mil. head)	18.4	17.3	18.7	July
Bulls 500 pounds and over (mil. head)	2.9	3.1	2.8	July
Heifers, steers, and bulls under 500 pounds (mil. head)	41.9	42.8	39.3	July
Calves born <sup>2</sup>	50.7	50.4	46.9	July
<b>Agricultural Trade:</b>				
Agricultural exports (\$bil.)	22	22	1.8	June
Agricultural imports (\$bil.)	10	10	1.0	June
<b>Prices:</b>				
Consumer price index, all items (1967=100)	147.7	161.2	170.1	June
Food (1967=100)	161.7	175.4	180.9	June
Food away from home (1967=100)	159.4	174.3	185.6	June
Food at home (1967=100)	162.4	175.8	179.7	June

<sup>1</sup>Average annual quantities per family and single person households bought by wage and clerical workers, 1960-61, based on Bureau of Labor Statistics figures.

<sup>2</sup>Calves born before July 1 plus the number expected to be born after July 1



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